holidays, and say that it would be unconscionable that we would go home to celebrate with our families without doing everything we can to make sure we send a clear and unambiguous message to our first responders—in the name of Jim Zadroga from New Jersey, for whom the 9/11 bill, the Zadroga bill, is named, and all those who responded on that fateful day—that we will never forget what they did for our fellow citizens, for this Nation on September 11, the day that changed the world.

We shouldn't have had to wait this long for the law to expire. At the same time, we are being told that we can't pass the legislation because we have to offset it. Yet we are talking about passing an $800 billion tax package, much of which goes to large corporations. I haven't heard any of my colleagues speak about the need to pay for this nearly trillion-dollar package which will deprive the Federal Treasury of anywhere between $800 billion and $1 trillion. Only the men and women who put their lives on the line on September 11 and the days that followed are waiting for Congress to act because we supposedly have to pay for the way in which we take care of their health care or the way in which we take care of the families, for those who lose a loved one as a result of the toxins and other circumstances that have led to their illnesses, that have led to their deaths. And unfortunately, we have seen a rising number of those individuals who responded on that fateful day who have died, including one very recently.

I don't understand how the rules don't apply to large corporations that will reap billions of dollars, but somehow those rules are asserted when we are trying to take care of the men and women who responded on that fateful day of September 11. I don't understand how there is any moral equivalency between them. There is none, and no one can claim there is any.

None of us can leave Washington for the holidays without passing this bill.

I would remind my colleagues of the immortal words of Charles Dickens in ''A Christmas Carol'':

I have always thought of Christmas time, when it has come round as a good time: a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time: the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on their journeys.

We should keep those words in mind as we approach the holidays. Beyond that, this isn't about the holiday spirit, it is about obligation. We should accept our profound, collective responsibility—not charity but responsibility—to act on this legislation. If we do not, and if we continue to insist on pay-for provisions when we don't insist on the same provisions that would provide benefits to America's largest corporations to the tune of hundreds of billions of dollars, we should be ashamed of ourselves.

I don't know which one of my colleagues can go to a September 11 commemoration and look those first responders in the eye. I don't know how you do that. The reauthorization bill I have cosponsored is necessary to provide the security and reassurances to those first responders that these critical programs will last longer than just what the next couple of months' funding will provide. It also permanently lists the statute of limitations on the Victim Compensation Fund to provide for those first responders and their families who need access beyond next year and, very importantly, it exempts these key programs from the budget sequestration cuts. The sequestration, which I voted against, imposes arbitrary and capricious cuts to funding that will continue to provide care and support for those September 11 heroes who sacrificed everything to help those in need on that tragic day.

The fact is, Congress must act. I don't think we should wait for a public outcry before we ensure that these heroes receive the care and support they deserve. I don't think we should wait for a future tragedy to observe what we should have done. The brave men and women who rushed into the towers to save others did not wait or hesitate to respond. They did not think about themselves. They did not think about the risk. They valiantly responded, and we—we—should not hesitate or wait to respond to their needs. To do so would be absolutely shameful.

With that, I yield the floor.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

REMEMBERING DR. SIDNEY CHARLES HUNTINGTON

Ms. MURKOWSKI. I wish to take a few minutes this afternoon to pay tribute to an amazing Alaskan, a man who lived a life that many would say was remarkable. Yet I think in his humble words he would respond that he just lived his life and did the best he could.

Dr. Sidney Charles Huntington was truly a great Alaskan. He died yesterday at the age of 100 years old in Galena, AK, which is on the Yukon River.

Sidney Huntington was a respected Athabascan elder. He was a culture bearer. He was a role model—definitely a role model. He was a mentor to so many, not only in his village but in his region and in his State. He was a prolific storyteller. He was a philosopher. He had words of wisdom. He was a reservoir of traditional knowledge. He was an outdoorsman who knew, understood, loved, and feared the land. He was a businessman. He was truly a public servant, especially when it came to education and conservation, and he was a warrior in the fight against youth suicide. These are just some of the words by which we remember one of our State's most treasured, cultural icons.

Sidney Huntington was known to his family and his friends as Grandpa Sid, and probably, for many good reasons, he had a lot of grandkids. There were the personal stories, and I think as we reflect on the 100 years of this great Alaskan, we will begin to share these many stories and tributes. He was certainly a savvy poker player. That is going to come out. He was a very generous man.

We were talking about him earlier today in my office. He was one of those guys who would truly give the shirt off his back. Sidney once encountered a young Native student who he thought had left the village and gone off to school, and the young man said: I couldn't go because I need to stay home and earn some money. Sidney literally took out his wallet, gave him eight hundred-dollar bills, and he told him to get to school. That was vintage Sidney. School was important. School had to be a priority, and Sidney wasn't going to let the fact that this young man thought he needed to stay home and make money stop him from going to school. He literally took out his wallet and solved the problem.

Sidney Huntington was one tough Alaskan. He was a man of very impeccable standards. He told it like it was. He would hold back not one iota.

I was in Galena after they had experienced some terrible flooding several years back, and the community had come together to talk about the FEMA response, how that was working with the State. You had the Federal Agency reps, you had the State people, and everybody was trying to figure out how to get through a difficult situation. Sidney Huntington—not sitting in the back of the room but sitting right up front at that table—said: By gosh, we have to get to work. No mincing words about it; he told it like it truly was. He was hardy. He was determined. He was very resilient. He was the real deal.

I was very privileged to know Sidney, and I was honored to be called his friend. That is quite an honor because you didn't choose Sidney to be your friend. Sidney chose you. He had identified me as somebody who could not only be helpful but that he could relate to, that we could have conversation back and forth.

It wasn't too many years ago that I flew into Galena. Galena is a very small village on the Yukon River, as I mentioned. You fly into the little airport there. I went to the very small terminal, and there was Sidney sitting on a chair right outside the little airport terminal.

I asked him: Where are you going, Sidney? I am sorry you are not going to be here while I am visiting Galena.

And he said: No, no, no. I am here because I have some talking to do with

you. Where are we on some of these education things? He was talking to me about No Child Left Behind. So Sidney was like: I am not going to miss her coming to Galena and perhaps not getting a chance to talk to her. He wasn't leaving. He was parked there to visit.

If Sidney Huntington chose to call you a friend, you didn't take it for granted, and you accepted that gift with great humility. I think about the relationships, the friendships I have made over the years. I can say nothing can make me, a third-generation Alaskan, feel more like an Alaskan than knowing I had earned the respect of Sidney Huntington.

Eric Mack, a journalist who worked in Galena, tells the story of how Sidney managed to survive when his snow machine fell through the ice. He was coming back from a trip. He had been out tending his trap line, and it was cold. It was about 30 degrees below zero. It was night. It was dark. He was on his snow machine. His snow machine went through a hole in the ice into a shallow section of the Yukon, and he was a long way from home. He dragged that snow machine out of the water, out of the icy water by himself. He made a fire from the gasoline and some frozen wood he had, and he kept himself from freezing to death. Think about how you do all of that. That is one tough Alaskan there.

Sidney Huntington was born in Huslia, which is on the Koyukuk River. He was born in 1915 to a Scots-Irish father who arrived from New York in 1897 to participate in the Gold Rush. His mother was Athabascan Indian. Sidney's mother died when Sidney was about 5 years old, and for about 2 weeks it left Sidney and two younger siblings to survive in the wilderness. Think about that.

This is all laid out in an exceptional book that Sidney wrote called ''Shadows on the Koyukuk.'' The details in the opening chapters are about the situation when he, as the oldest of three children, at 5 years old, was in a cabin in the middle of the wilderness with his mother and his mother died. At 5, he was the only one to care for his two siblings. This was the beginning of, again, a remarkable life for a remarkable man.

His father lived off the land as a trapper and a trader, and so the stories that are shared through Sidney's book, again, are just remarkable about what was happening in Alaska in the early 1900s. Sidney and his siblings first were sent to the Anvik Mission for schooling, and then he later attended the BIA school at Eklutna. He basically got the equivalent of a third-grade education. That was it. That was it for his formal schooling—third grade.

You need to keep that in mind as I talk about the rest of Sidney's story and his life. When he was 12 years old he returned to help his father work the trap line and learn the subsistence lifestyle, so he was out in the middle of Alaska. He was out in the wilderness. He was not in school. By the age of 16 he was earning a living hunting and trapping and at age 22 he went to work in a gold mine. In 1963 Sidney moved to Galena to work for the Air Force as a carpenter, and then in the 1970s he went into the fish-processing business. So he had been everything. He had been a gold miner, he had been a carpenter, he had been in fish processing, he had been a hunter and a trapper and a subsistence guy. He was truly living a traditional life in rural Alaska, sustaining himself and his family through a mixture of subsistence and participation in the cash economy. Many around the State share this life story, but that was just one dimension of Sidney.

This man, who had the equivalent of a third-grade education, served two decades on the Alaska boards of fish and game. In 1993 he published the best-selling biography I just mentioned entitled ''Shadows on the Koyukuk.'' In fact, this book he wrote is so good, is so compelling, it is the book I take around to the high schools when I go to visit students. I never leave a school visit without leaving something there, and I leave a book for their library. The book I have chosen to leave with students all over the State is ''Shadows on the Koyukuk'' because of the amazing accomplishments of this amazing Alaskan.

The University of Alaska Fairbanks in 1989 awarded Sidney an honorary doctorate in public service. Here again is an extraordinarily accomplished man, a man with a third-grade education, focused on public service, education, helping his community, his State, and publishing a best-selling biography.

Through the University of Alaska system, Sidney participated in oral history interviews that will be examined by historians and students for decades to home.

He was truly the stuff of which legends are made. Alaska holds a lot of legends. It is a big State with tall stories. But Sidney, once again, was the real deal. His life was a profile of courage and inspiration. It has not only been chronicled in books and interviews—it was even played out in theater in a stage play called ''The Winter Bear.''

''The Winter Bear'' tells the fictional story of a young Native man who contemplated suicide. In this play, this young Native man is sentenced to cut wood for Sidney Huntington. Making a pact with Sidney to live, he goes on to construct a traditional bear spear under Sidney's guidance. That spear is used to bring down this marauding bear. But Sidney is injured in the incident, and the young man, who is very insular and very afraid of public speaking, must now speak for Sidney before thousands of people at the Alaska Federation of Natives convention. At this point, the young man finds himself and his voice, recognizes the value of his life, and emerges as a leader.

While this play, ''The Winter Bear,'' may be fictional, Sidney Huntington's experience with suicide is absolutely not. In real life, Sidney lost children to suicide. He grieved for them every day and shared his loss with schoolchildren who visited his cabin. As we visited in quiet conversations, he shared with me the loss and grief that he felt, as not only his children but others in his community and his region have suffered because of suicide.

Sidney was a champion for young people. He believed in the future of our young people, urging that they choose life, that they get a good education, and that they take pride in their proud heritage.

Sidney Huntington was the patriarch of a large and extended family. I know so very many of them, and they are all very accomplished in their own right. He is survived by his wife, Angela. They were married 72 years; that is a pretty good marriage there. He has some 30 children, both biological and adopted, and many, many grandchildren. On May 10 of this year, they gathered in Galena to celebrate the centennial of Sidney's birth, and they all wore T-shirts that bore some of Sidney's words of wisdom: Make life worth living; work hard; keep up a good spirit; have a good attitude toward others—this will take you a long way in life. These are words to live by and words to remember an Alaskan who was truly larger than life and as large as the great State that he called home.

I was privileged by the gift of the friendship of Sidney Huntington. Alaska is privileged by the gift of his legacy. This man is a true hero of our homeland. He is now gone, but his life of inspiration will long, long be remembered. I am grateful for the opportunity to again pay tribute to a great Alaskan and to extend my condolences and that of the U.S. Senate to his family, his many extended relatives, and those of us throughout the State who cherish a great Alaskan leader.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS BILL

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, earlier today the U.S. Senate added to its list of accomplishments this year by passing important education reform. The Democratic leader, our friend from Nevada, has called this Senate ''unproductive,'' but the Washington Post took a look at what he had to say and gave him three Pinocchios for that one.

When we look at the accomplishments of this year, they are bipartisan, to be sure—as they must be. That is the nature of this institution. Even the minority can, and frequently does, stop us from doing things the majority would like to do. But what has been remarkable is where we have been able to find consensus and work together. Certainly, the education bill—the Every Student Succeeds Act—is an example of that, as is the leadership not only of Majority Leader MCCONNELL, who